



Ujamaa Place

*Evaluation of 2013 participant
outcomes*

M A Y 2 0 1 4

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Key findings

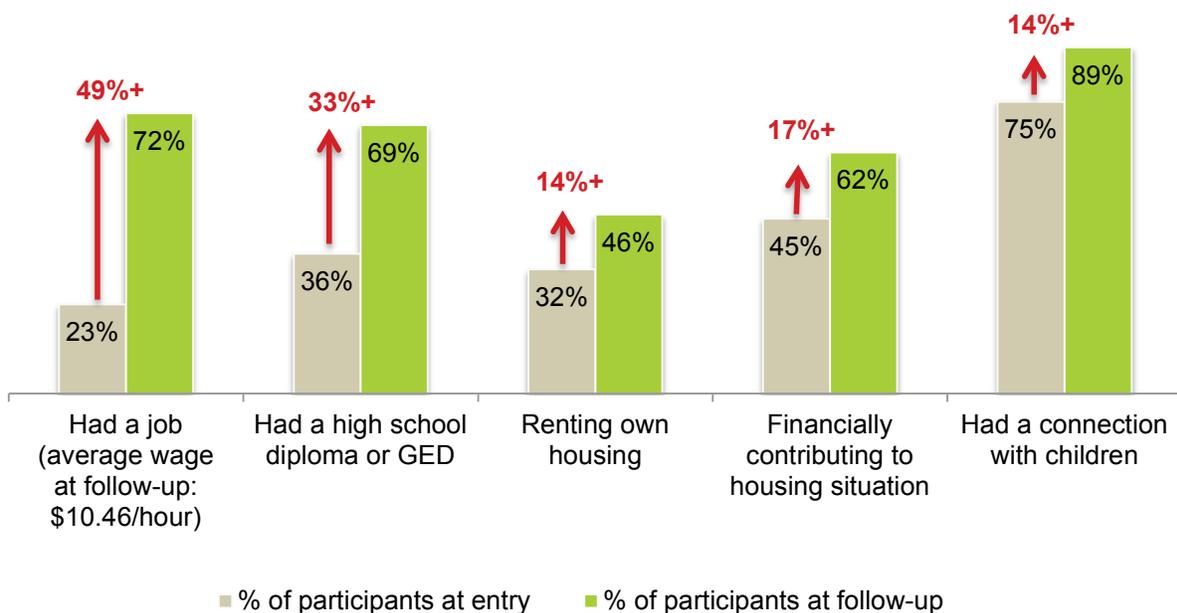
Wilder Research conducted an evaluation of programming delivered by Ujamaa Place, an organization that serves primarily African American men (ages 17-29) who have multiple barriers to becoming stable, productive members of the community. Wilder Research obtained entry and follow-up data for 39 participants that received services in 2013. As part of the evaluation, Wilder Research conducted a return on investment (ROI) analysis of Ujamaa Place programming for all 85 participants that received services in 2013 (extrapolated from the 39 participants included in the evaluation). A conservative ROI analysis indicates a return on investment of two dollars for every dollar invested in Ujamaa Place, as well as a net gain for society of approximately \$669,000 during 2013.

Overall
RETURN
ON INVESTMENT:
\$2 for every **\$1**

NET GAIN
for society (during 2013):
\$669,000

In addition, Figure 1 shows some of the positive ways in which participants' lives have changed since entering Ujamaa Place. At follow-up, more participants had a job, more participants had a high school diploma or GED, more participants were renting their own housing, more participants were contributing financially to their housing situation, and more participants had a connection with their children (as compared with participants' status at program entry).

1. Change in percentage for participant outcomes from entry to follow-up



Overall outcomes and impact of Ujamaa Place programming

An analysis of outcomes for 39 Ujamaa Place participants shows improvements in each of the targeted outcome areas (stable housing situation, increase educational attainment, secure and retain a job, connect to family and children, eliminate contact with the penal system). The following findings in particular showcase some of the positive effects that occurred in participants' lives since entering Ujamaa Place:

- **Increased housing stability was experienced by participants.** Despite multiple barriers to stable housing, almost half of participants (46%) were renting their own housing at follow-up (compared to 32% at entry), and another 16 percent were living with relatives and contributing to housing payment. In total, 62 percent of participants were financially contributing in some way to their housing situation at follow-up (compared to 45% at entry).
- **The number of participants who had a high school diploma or GED almost doubled.** The percent of participants who had a high school diploma or GED increased from 36% at entry to 69% at follow-up. In addition, one participant earned his associate's degree while in the program and another two were pursuing college degrees at follow-up.
- **Employment rates tripled among participants.** Less than one-quarter of participants (23%) had a job at entry compared to almost three-quarters (72%) at follow-up. Average wage for participants who had a job at follow-up was \$10.46/hour.
- **More participants reported a connection to their children.** While three-quarters of participants (75%) had a connection to their children at entry, that percent rose to almost 9 in 10 (89%) at follow-up.

Wilder Research recommends further study to fully understand changes in participant relationships with children and other family members since program entry, such as amount of financial support that participants give to children or other family members, level of emotional connection participants have to children or other family members, and whether participants act as a role model for their children.

- **Participants with a felony conviction at entry were not convicted of another felony.** No participants were convicted of felony charges while in Ujamaa Place programming, a favorable finding considering that almost 7 in 10 participants (69%) had previously been convicted of a felony and the Minnesota Department of Corrections estimates the 12-month felony reconviction rate at 14 percent.

What is Ujamaa Place?

Ujamaa Place is an organization focused on young African American men (primarily between the ages of 17 and 29) in Saint Paul, Minnesota, who are experiencing multiple barriers to becoming stable, productive members of the community. These barriers include being undereducated (no high school degree or GED), unemployed, homeless, affiliated with gangs, having a criminal history, having mental health and substance abuse issues, no father in their life, and a general marginalization by greater society.

A group of leaders in the Saint Paul African American community, including the former Saint Paul Chief of Police and former state senator John Harrington, Executive Director of the Saint Paul YWCA Billy Collins, Nathaniel Khaliq of the NAACP, and several members of the Black Ministerial Alliance and the Council on Black Minnesotans identified that programming for this population presented a significant gap in the social service delivery system in Saint Paul.

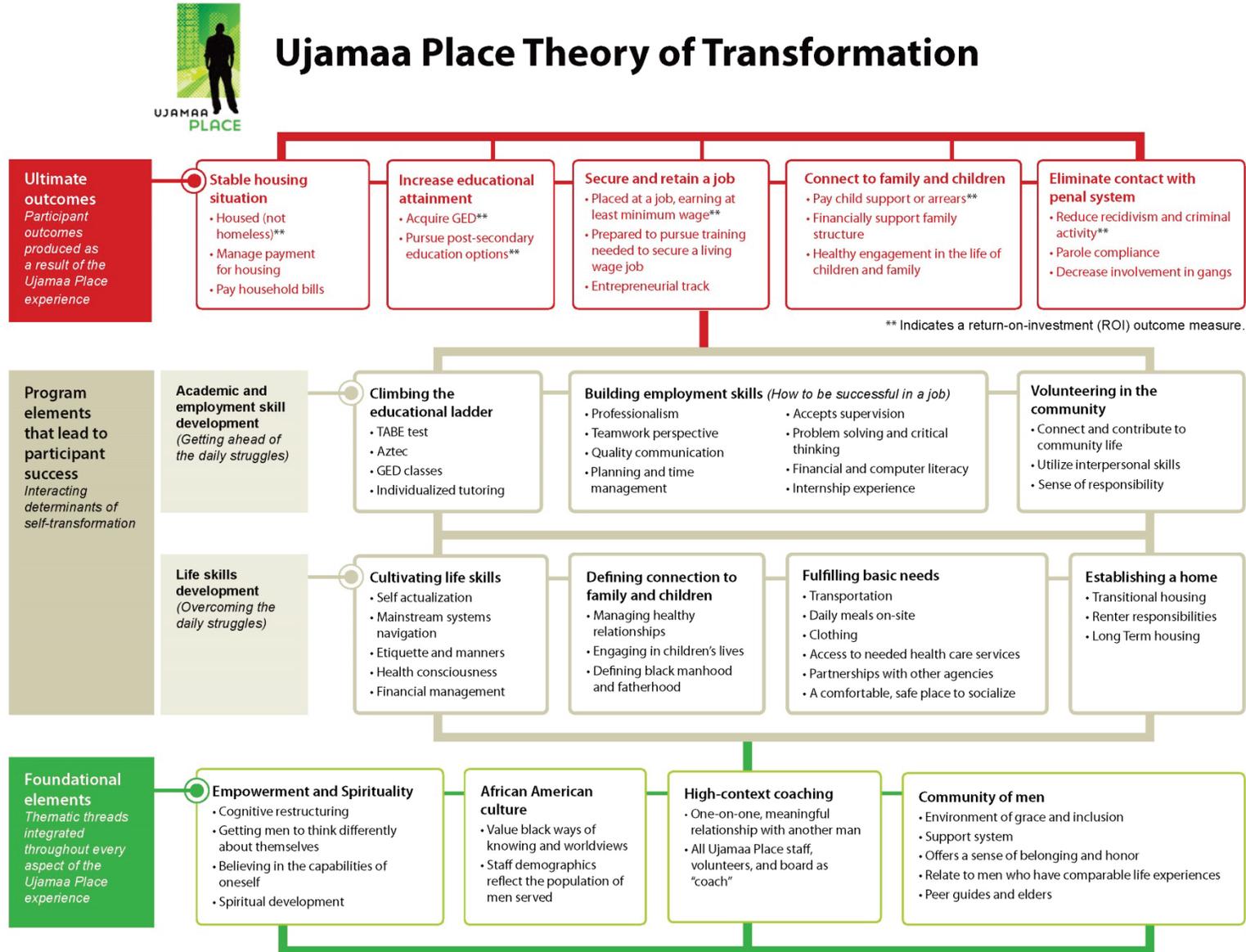
A similar program to Ujamaa Place called Awali Place was developed by Twin Cities RISE! and piloted in Saint Paul in 2008 and part of 2009. In late 2008, Twin Cities RISE! determined that Awali Place would be part of an overall budget reduction due to financial constraints. A group of concerned citizens decided to work together to establish Ujamaa Place to further develop the program model and to build on the good work conducted within the Awali Place program. Ujamaa Place began providing services in November 2010.

The purpose of Ujamaa Place is to foster the development of young African American men to become strong, responsible, employed, prosperous men and fathers who provide and contribute positively to their communities. The name “Ujamaa” comes from the Swahili word for extended family or familyhood and demonstrates the concept of people working together in unity to support one another by any means available.

Ujamaa Place Theory of Transformation

Together with Ujamaa Place leadership (board members and CEO), program manager, program staff, and program participants, Wilder Research created the Ujamaa Place Theory of Transformation, which identifies foundational elements of Ujamaa Place programming, program elements that lead to desired participant outcomes, and ultimate desired participant outcomes. The Theory of Transformation can be viewed on the next page.

2. Ujamaa Place Theory of Transformation



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Foundational elements

Understanding the foundational elements of Ujamaa Place programming is critical for responsive and appropriate program evaluation as well as for helping to contextualize outcomes experienced by participants. Foundational elements include:

Empowerment and spirituality

Ujamaa Place uses “cognitive restructuring,” a proven psychological approach, to help men in their program to think differently about themselves. Key components of Ujamaa Place programming that fosters participant empowerment include:

- Accountability from participants and from program staff (i.e., coach and participant know what to expect from one another)
- Regular personal contact
- Immediate follow-up any time a participant does anything out of the ordinary
- Seeing participants as men – responsible and responsive adults
- Treating participants with dignity, acceptance, graciousness, and affirmation

By guiding participants through an empowerment curriculum, Ujamaa Place seeks to help participants understand the consequences of their individual actions and for men to start believing in their own capabilities.

While Ujamaa Place is not a religious institution and does not promote any particular religion or doctrine, the program recognizes that a person’s spirit is a part of their reality. Ujamaa Place maintains, however, that developing and maintaining an emotional connection to some force larger and stronger than oneself can ultimately be important to emotional survival if one finds himself placed in positions of greater stress than he is normally accustomed to handling. As such, Ujamaa Place program staff support participants’ spiritual development.

Ujamaa Place men said the following about the empowerment curriculum at Ujamaa Place:

“I have experienced growth in accountability, self-control, discipline, and a greater sense of responsibility.”

“The empowerment class has given me a new outlook on my future. I have gained a lot of self-confidence. This program has played a big part in my life.”

“Yeah, this helped me with life skills, helped me to be proud of who I am. It also let me know that my biggest failure is giving up.”

African American culture

Two characteristics of Ujamaa Place allow African American culture to be at the center of the Ujamaa Place experience:

- **Valuing black ways of knowing and worldviews.**

Ujamaa Place holds the belief that African American culture and unique historical experience are often not fully appreciated by those with the power to make decisions that greatly affect the lives of African Americans. Ujamaa Place seeks to instill in participants a thorough understanding and positive valuation of African American worldviews.

- **Staff demographics reflect the population served.** Like the population of men served, Ujamaa Place full-time staff is fully composed of African American men and women who understand what it means to be black. Board members and volunteers of Ujamaa Place who are not African American have respect for African American culture and provide alternative perspectives that Ujamaa Place participants can learn from. In addition, more than half of Ujamaa Place’s board members identify as African American, a goal set by organization leadership at the program’s outset.

“Learning to connect back to the black community [is a way I’ve grown since being in Ujamaa Place].”

—Ujamaa Place participant

High-context coaching

Ujamaa Place provides a high-context relationship for each participant via a coach, who is a Ujamaa Place staff member. All facets of a participant’s life – mind, body, spirit – are viewed as important by the staff and addressed in the coaching relationship.

Two characteristics define high-context coaching for Ujamaa Place:

- **One-on-one, meaningful relationships with other men.**

Participants are seen and treated as cultural, spiritual, and ethical people, with attention paid to each participant’s education, health consciousness, and spiritual development. In many cases, this may be the first time in a participant’s life that they have a personal, meaningful relationship with another man.

- **All Ujamaa Place staff, volunteers, and board members serve as “coach”.** When in the presence of participants, every staff member, volunteer, and board member plays the role of a coach to teach and guide the men. This is an important component to the Ujamaa Place experience

Ujamaa Place men said the following about Ujamaa’s high-context coaching:

“I’ve grown in mind, body, and soul. I think Ujamaa Place is great.”

“ [I’ve received coaching in] ways as far as becoming more motivated, open-minded, and a bit of inspiration to put myself out there to pursue my goals.”

because it builds mutual accountability for everyone involved in Ujamaa Place and requires that everyone steps up to the occasion.

Community of men

“Ujamaa” means collective or extended family in Swahili. Ujamaa Place puts the community of men at the center of individual and group success. This is achieved through:

- **Creating an environment of grace and inclusion.** Ujamaa Place immerses participants in an environment of inclusion, as opposed to one of marginalization. Ujamaa Place staff work to establish an “environment of grace” as opposed to one of judging and condemnation.
- **Participants acting as a support system for each other.** The community of men is often able to create bonds because participants are able to relate to men who have comparable life experiences. While it is not required, participants often forge relationships with each other outside of Ujamaa Place by spending time with each other and getting to know members of each other’s families.
- **Participants earning the roles of elder and guide.** *Guides* are participants who are in the last four months of the Ujamaa Place experience and have begun the volunteer or internship portion of the program. *Elder* is reserved for those participants who have displayed exemplary performance at Ujamaa Place. Elders come back to Ujamaa Place to act as peer mentors and community leaders. They are program graduates or are nearing completion of the program.

Ujamaa Place men said the following about Ujamaa’s community of men:

“The community of men here really makes it happen for me. I don’t mean to get soft on anyone, but it’s the guys here that make me keep coming back.”

“Being connected with people like me [is why I like coming to Ujamaa Place].”

“We are able to kick it outside of the walls here. We are bonding with others in a healthy way. We know that we don’t need to prove anything to each other by acting out or being stupid.”

Study purpose and methods

The purpose of this evaluation is to demonstrate the impact Ujamaa Place programming has had in the lives of its participants, and for the broader community. Using internal records collected by Ujamaa Place program staff and volunteers, Wilder Research analyzed entry (baseline) and follow-up data for Ujamaa Place program participants who received services in 2013 in order to report changes in the five ultimate participant outcome areas, as defined by the Ujamaa Place Theory of Transformation (which can be viewed on page three):

- Stable housing situation
- Increase educational attainment
- Secure and retain a job
- Connect to family and children
- Eliminate contact with the penal system

Wilder Research included participants in the evaluation if they received services from Ujamaa Place in calendar year 2013 (January-December). Enrollment dates for participants, however, varied greatly, with five of the 39 participants (13%) having been enrolled for only two months at follow-up (these five participants are accounted for in the “2-5 months” category in Figure 3). The longest amount of time that a participant included in this evaluation spent in the program was 38 months.

3. Length of time in program at follow-up

	Participants	%
2-5 months	12	31%
6-11 months	10	26%
12-23 months	10	26%
24-35 months	5	13%
36 months or longer	2	5%

Outcomes experienced by participants in some cases varied by length of time spent in Ujamaa Place Programming (and such variance should be expected between participants that spent two months in the program as compared to those who were enrolled for longer

amounts of time). When applicable, Wilder Research reported differences in outcomes as they relate to length of time spent in program.

For the data collection phase of this evaluation, Wilder Research created multiple participant data forms for Ujamaa Place, including an entry form, a follow-up form, and individual update forms (to be used between entry and follow-up for updates to participant status relating to outcome measures). Wilder Research used participant entry data as baseline data, though it should be noted that individual update form data (self-reported, retrospective baseline status) was used in lieu of entry data when entry data was unavailable.

Using Ujamaa Place's online data management system, Wilder Research obtained entry data for 39 participants. Ujamaa Place collected follow-up data for these participants by administering the follow-up form at a group event, when participants had appointments with Ujamaa Place staff, and by calling individual participants.

Return on investment analysis methods

A return on investment (ROI) analysis was also completed for this evaluation. Several measures were identified for the purposes of ROI analysis, including: whether a participant was homeless, whether a participant had acquired a GED or pursued postsecondary options, whether a participant was employed and earning at least minimum wage, whether a participant was paying child support or arrears, and whether a participant recidivated. These measures were identified because their outcomes may have monetary impacts for state or federal governments. Due to data limitations (incomplete or inconsistent participant data, primarily), however, ROI estimates were computed for only two outcomes areas: secure and retain a job, and eliminate contact with the penal system.

Ujamaa Place participants were expected to be more likely to find and retain jobs and increase their personal income. With a more stable economic situation, participants may be less likely to engage in criminal activities, which in turn, will reduce the costs to society associated with law enforcement, incarceration, and victim's costs. As part of the ROI component of this evaluation, Wilder Research analyzed the potential economic impact of the program and compared it to the investment made by society to achieve these benefits. The result is a measure of the economic worthiness of the Ujamaa Place program, expressed as the social return on investment in the program (ROI).

The ROI is computed as the ratio between the sum of all annual benefits associated with the program's outcomes and the total investment in the program. Wilder Research only included benefits from outcomes for which there were sufficient data to compute the impact of the program. Other general assumptions and parameters used in the computations include:

- The impact of the program was computed using outcome information from 39 participants with available data (at entry and/or follow-up) during 2013
- Cost data refers to actual revenues and expenses during 2013
- All calculations refer to one-year benefits and costs
- Marginal cost of incarcerations were computed by Wilder Research using annual expenditure data from the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC Performance Report from 2002-2010 – <http://www.doc.state.mn.us>)
- Victim’s costs data taken from the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehensions (Unified Crime Report 2012 – <https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/bca/bca-divisions/mnjis/pages/uniform-crime-reports.aspx>)

Limitations

Data collection was the most significant limitation for this evaluation. It should be noted, however, that Ujamaa Place is a relatively new program and, moreover, that this is the first evaluation completed of the program. It is not uncommon for new programs or new evaluations to experience data collection challenges, and the Ujamaa Place staff and leadership worked very hard to provide as much data as possible for this evaluation. (Wilder Research is also working with Ujamaa Place on an ongoing basis to further strengthen participant data collection to support future years’ evaluation efforts.) **That being said, it is critical for Ujamaa Place to incorporate adequate data collection and entry protocols to ensure accurate representation of Ujamaa Place’s efforts in future evaluations.**

Overall, 85 Ujamaa Place participants were served during 2013, of which Wilder Research received entry and follow-up data for 39 participants. In some instances incompleteness or inconsistency of data for these 39 participants served as a barrier to adequately representing Ujamaa Place’s efforts and participant outcomes for 2013. These difficulties are reflected in entry/follow-up comparison findings, but also in the ROI component of this evaluation. In particular, some entry/follow-up measures are not reported due to incomplete or inconsistent participant data; likewise, ROI estimates could not be calculated for three outcome areas due to data limitations (stable housing situation, increase educational attainment, and connect to family and children).

Ujamaa Place activities and impact

As is reflected in the design of the Theory of Transformation, each ultimate outcome is connected to the others – while each outcome area is presented separately in this report, none of them should be thought of as stand-alone in practice. Each ultimate outcome is informed by previous research on employment, family formation and stability, desistance from criminal behavior, educational attainment, and empowerment among low-income, undereducated men.

Basic needs assistance and enabling volunteerism

In addition to the activities and services that relate directly to participants' ability to achieve ultimate outcomes, Ujamaa Place program staff also help fulfill participants' basic needs, such as transportation assistance, daily meals (which are delivered on-site), clothing when needed, referrals to needed health care and mental health services, as well as a comfortable, safe place to socialize. If participants require some other type of basic needs assistance that Ujamaa Place staff are unable to provide, Ujamaa Place staff provide referrals to other agencies to address that need.

Ujamaa Place currently has partnerships with the following agencies for basic needs assistance: Keystone Community Services (for food assistance and emergency financial housing assistance), Father Project (for issues concerning child support, custody, and parenting time/visitation), Upscale Quest (for driver's license restoration), People Incorporated (for housing assistance for participants who are long-term homeless), Par 4 Barbershop (for haircuts), My Home Inc. (for anger management and chemical dependency classes), and the St. Paul Foundation (for emergency rental assistance).

Participants also volunteer their time in the community through Ujamaa Place with the goals of connecting and contributing to community life, using and strengthening interpersonal skills, and continuing to develop a sense of responsibility. In 2013, Ujamaa Place participants volunteered by: passing out flyers for and staffing activity tables at National Night Out with Unity Unitarian Church; equipment setup/tear down and cleaning at Rondo Days; equipment setup/teardown and assisting with programming for the Back to School Backpack Giveaway program with Family Values for Life, assisting the Building and Grounds Maintenance crew at Progressive Baptist Church, and unloading trucks and stocking food shelves at Keystone Community Services food shelf.

Stable housing situation

Program activities and services

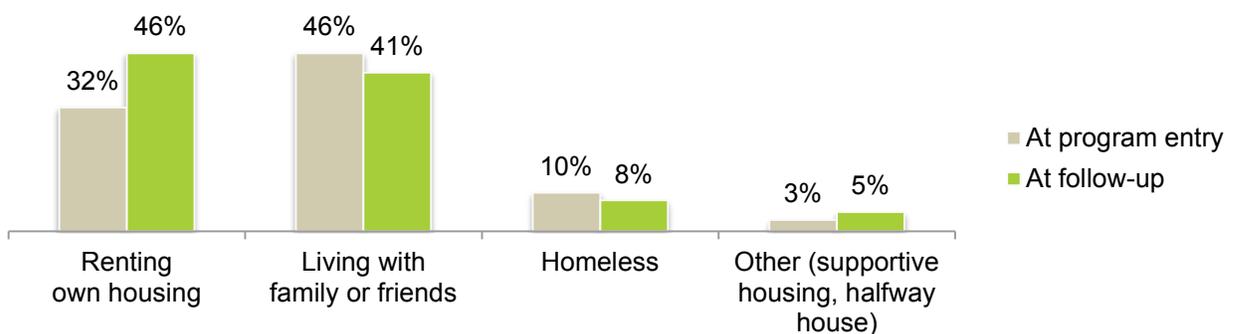
Ujamaa Place provides services and training to help participants establish a home. During their time at Ujamaa Place, participants progress through the RentWise curriculum, which focuses on financial management skills, and guides participants through aspects of establishing a home (finding a place, the rental process, moving in, taking care of a home, and moving out). In addition, participants set individual goals with their coach pertaining to housing. Indicators of success for Ujamaa Place participants regarding establishing a home include: not being homeless, managing payment for housing, and contributing financially to their living situation.

Changes from entry to follow-up among participants

At program entry, participants indicated that they were experiencing multiple barriers to stable housing, such as poor or no credit history (15 participants), lack of rental history (13 participants), poor references from a previous landlord (5 participants), previous evictions (4 participants), and past unpaid utility bills (2 participants).

Despite multiple barriers to stable housing, housing outcomes for the Ujamaa Place participants who are included in this evaluation were generally positive. Almost half of participants (46%) were renting their own housing at follow-up compared to about one-third (32%) at entry. About 1 out of 10 participants were homeless at both entry and follow-up (Figure 4).

4. Participants' housing situation at entry and follow-up



Of those who were homeless at follow-up (3 participants, or 8%), length of time of homeless ranged from less than one week to nine months. Among those who were homeless at follow-

up, one participant had been enrolled in the program for less than six months, another had been enrolled for more than a year, and the other had been enrolled for more than two years.

In addition, the number of participants who were contributing to payment for their housing increased from 17 participants (45%) at program entry to 24 participants (62%) at follow-up. Of participants that were paying for housing at follow-up, the average financial contribution was \$249 per month. This increase in participants who were paying for their housing could be due in part to the increased number of participants who secured jobs, an outcome area addressed later in this report.

It should be pointed out that while 18 participants (46%) were renting their own housing at follow-up, 24 participants (62%) were contributing to payment for their housing. Ujamaa Place records indicate that these six additional participants were living with family members (such as relatives, partners or spouses, or children) and were financially contributing to their family's housing situation, a fact which may influence the likelihood of developing a connection to family – another outcome area addressed later in this report.

Increase educational attainment

Program activities and services

Two primary goals for Ujamaa Place participants regarding educational attainment are GED completion and/or the pursuit of postsecondary education. During their time in Ujamaa Place, participants receive individualized tutoring from Ujamaa Place program staff and/or volunteers. To assist staff and volunteers in delivering appropriate individualized learning experiences to participants, Ujamaa Place uses the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), the scores of which serve as a benchmark for participants moving towards GED completion, as well as the Aztec adult education program, which offers interactive individualized lessons for participants via computer software modules. In addition to individualized tutoring for GED preparation, Ujamaa Place provides group classroom learning that focuses on basic math, reading, and writing, as well as social studies and African American studies.

“It’s not just about passing the GED, the people here care about what you want to do in your life. It’s about bettering our lives; finishing the GED and going to college.”

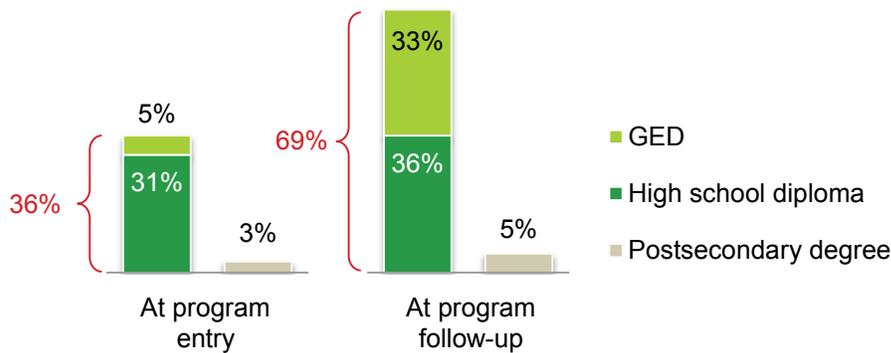
—Ujamaa Place participant

When participants reach an appropriate reading level, they begin to take practice GED exams in preparation for the official Steck-Vaughn GED exam. Participants are then given the opportunity to take the official GED exam through Ujamaa Place.

Changes from entry to follow-up among participants

At entry, just over one-third of participants (36%) had a high school diploma or GED compared to almost 7 in 10 participants (69%) at follow-up. This change is due mainly to participants receiving their GED (11 participants received their GED while enrolled in Ujamaa Place), a finding which indicates that Ujamaa Place sufficiently prepares participants for GED completion. Moreover, one participant received his associate's degree after enrolling in Ujamaa Place.

5. Participants' educational attainment at entry and follow-up



In addition, one-third of program participants (33%) were furthering their education at follow-up. Six participants said they were working toward their GED, two participants indicated that they were enrolled in postsecondary programs, and one participant was enrolled in a construction trade program. Another three participants – all of whom had a high school degree or GED – said they were continuing to further their education through classes provided at Ujamaa Place, but were not enrolled in a formal postsecondary program.

Secure and retain a job

Program activities and services

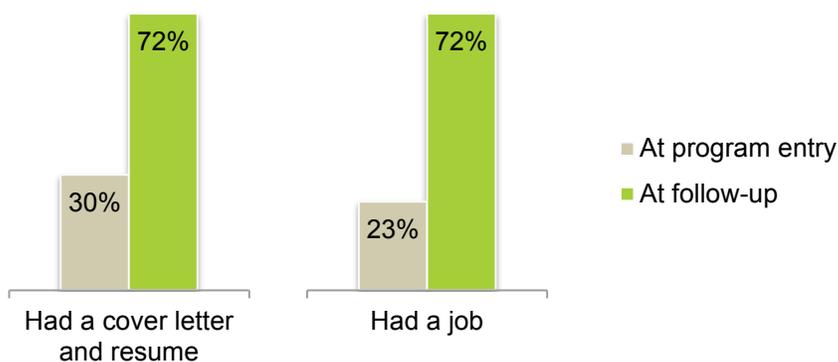
Through employment curriculum delivered by Ujamaa Place program staff, participants develop: a professional demeanor, a teamwork mentality, communication skills, time management skills, acceptance of supervision, and critical thinking skills. Participants ultimately seek a paying internship or job. In addition, Ujamaa Place is pursuing evening programming and service delivery to accommodate participants with daytime jobs.

Changes from entry to follow-up among participants

Being “job ready” includes having an accurate and up-to-date cover letter and resume. At program entry, less than one-third of participants (30%) had a cover letter and resume. At follow-up, however, almost three-fourths (72%) had a cover letter and resume.

Moreover, the employment rate among participants tripled from entry to follow-up (23% at entry compared to 72% at follow-up). In addition to the employment-related services they received from Ujamaa Place, these changes in employment status may also reflect the increase in overall educational attainment among participants, perhaps resulting in a wider variety of employment options.

6. Participants’ changes in employment status



Participants also reported wages that exceed Ujamaa Place’s goal of participants earning at least minimum wage (currently \$7.25/hour in Minnesota). Of the 28 participants who had a job at follow-up, 21 reported their hourly wages. Wages ranged from \$8.00/hour to \$17.07/hour with an average wage of \$10.46/hour.

In addition, at follow-up 9 in 10 participants (90%) said they that have “some” or “all” of the skills they need to get and keep a job, with more than 4 in 10 participants (44%) saying that they have “all” the skills they need to get and keep a job. Participants indicated a desire for increasing their customer service and communication skills, computer and typing skills, leadership abilities, and money and time management skills. Three of the four participants who said they needed more skills had been enrolled in Ujamaa Place for more than two years, which might indicate that opportunities for continued job skill development may be helpful for longer-term participants.

7. Participants' self-assessment of job readiness at follow-up

	Participants	%
I have all the skills I need to get and keep a job	17	44%
I have some of the skills that I need to get and keep a job	18	46%
I need more skills in order to get and keep a job	4	10%

Return on investment

Ujamaa Place expects participants and society to benefit from increased personal income from employment. The average personal income associated with program participation is \$13,674 per participant per year, or \$264,349 total for the 19 participants with new jobs at follow-up. This benefit comes from participants finding new jobs while in the program.

Connect to family and children

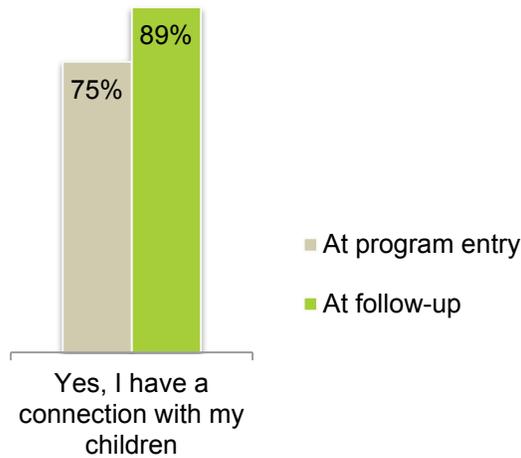
Program activities and services

Ujamaa Place helps participants connect with their family and children through classroom curriculum that focuses on healthy relationship management skills, building employment skills, and establishing a home. A key indicator of success in this area is that participants have defined for themselves what a “healthy relationship with his family or children” means and practices that definition. Other indicators of success include: paying child support or arrears (if applicable) and financially supporting family.

Changes from entry to follow-up among participants

Of the 39 participants included in this evaluation, 28 participants (72%) have children. At entry about 4 in 10 participants (39%) reported that their children live with them compared to about 3 in 10 of participants (29%) at follow-up. Despite the decrease in participants whose children live with them, participants were somewhat more likely to report that they had a connection with their children at follow-up compared to entry (Figure 8). (Participants were asked, “Do you have a connection to your children?” and responded either yes or no.)

8. Participants' self-reported connection with children at entry and follow-up



For participants whose children did *not* live with them at follow-up, nine participants (45%) indicated that they pay child support while 11 participants (55%) did not. However, only one-third of those participants (33%) who paid child support were current on their payments at follow-up.

As mentioned earlier, six participants were living with family members and financially contributing to their family's housing. This finding indicates that some participants at least are financially supporting their family.

Eliminate contact with the penal system

Program activities and services

Ujamaa Place seeks to reduce recidivism and criminal activity, increase parole compliance, and decrease gang involvement among participants (as applicable). Desistance from criminal behavior has been linked to increases in each of the already addressed outcome areas: stable housing, educational attainment, employment, and connections with family.

Changes from entry to follow-up among participants

At entry, almost 7 in 10 participants (69%, or 27 participants) reported that they had been convicted of a felony prior to entry. **At the time of follow-up, no previously convicted participants had been convicted of an additional felony.** This is a favorable finding

considering that according to the Minnesota Department of Corrections the 12-month felony reconviction rate is 14 percent.¹

It should be noted that two participants (5%) – who had not been *previously* convicted of a felony – were convicted of a felony for the first time at some point after entering the program, though these participants were not sentenced to jail or prison. These sentences will be reduced upon successful probation completion.

Return on investment

Savings to society from crime reduction come from at least two sources: the savings in incarceration costs from reduced number of days in jail and the avoided costs to victims from crimes not committed. Wilder Research estimates that the Ujamaa Place program saves society \$4,550 per year from reduced crime costs. Most of these savings come from avoided jail costs. The average savings per participant is \$117 per year. **It should be noted that this estimate does not take into account government personnel costs, other administration costs, or emotional costs to victims** (cost of repayment for stolen property to victims is included).

9. Yearly savings to society from participants' reduced criminal activity since program entry

	Per participant	Total savings (N=39)
Reduced number of days in jail	\$79.40	\$3,098
Avoided victims' costs	\$37.20	\$1,452
Total savings from reduced crime	\$117	\$4,550

Wilder Research estimated that the overall reduction in arrests associated with participation in the Ujamaa Place program leads to a reduction of nearly 24 days in jail (assuming an average incarceration of 30 days). Using data from the Minnesota Department of Corrections, Wilder Research estimates that an additional inmate costs the justice system about \$132 per day. In addition, about 26 percent of felons in Minnesota are re-incarcerated after 12 months, whereas none of the 29 Ujamaa Place participants who are convicted felons were re-incarcerated. The resulting estimated savings from avoided incarcerations is \$3,098, and the average per participant savings are \$79 per year.

¹ Minnesota Department of Corrections (2010). *Performance Report Fiscal Year 2010*. Retrieved from: <http://www.doc.state.mn.us/pages/files/large-files/Publications/legislative-reports/FY10PerformanceReport.pdf>

In addition, the average value of stolen property in Minnesota per crime is \$917. About half of the participants who had been convicted of a crime at program entry committed robberies. Since the program is expected to contribute to a total reduction of nearly 3 arrests per year, we estimate that about \$1,452 in victims' cost will be avoided. The average savings per participant is \$37.

Items to consider

There are number of items to consider when interpreting the findings of this report. Wilder Research offers the following highlights, challenges, and recommendations as primary jumping-off points for further discussion.

Return on investment summary

Based on available outcome data on employment and contact with the justice system during 2013, the estimated benefits per participant reach \$13,790 per year. The investment per participant during that year is \$5,922, for a return on investment of two dollars for every dollar spent in the Ujamaa Place program. The net gain for every individual served is \$7,868, and the total net benefit for society generated by the program for the nearly 85 participants who were served in 2013 reaches more than half a million dollar (extrapolated from the 39 participants for whom data were available).

Specifically, findings from the ROI analysis imply a net gain for society of approximately \$669,000 for the 85 participants served during 2013. It is clear that the program also has a positive impact on the three other outcome areas as well (stable housing situation, increase educational attainment, and connect to family and children). However, with the current available data, it is not possible to estimate the ROI of these outcomes due to data limitations.

As the program grows and develops its data collection practices, Wilder Research expects to be better able to estimate the value of other potential outcomes and obtain a more complete ROI. Wilder Research believes that including these potential benefits could raise the ROI to more than five dollars for every dollar invested. Though these benefits cannot objectively be included in the current ROI, Wilder Research acknowledges that they indicate the potential economic impact that the program has.

Continued challenges for Ujamaa Place participants and recommendations for addressing them

Despite substantial and meaningful benefits in many spheres of their lives, internal participant data and responses to open-ended survey questions show that Ujamaa Place participants are still experiencing challenges and could benefit from continued services and involvement with Ujamaa Place and/or other services and supports. The following are recommendations for increasing intensity of or supplementing services delivered by Ujamaa Place program staff:

- More than half of participants (56%) noted they don't have all the skills they need yet to get and keep a job (this includes participants who responded "I have some of the skills I need to get and keep a job" as well as those who responded "I need more skills to get and keep a job"). While Ujamaa Place is clearly successful at preparing participants for acquiring their GED and for working an entry-level job, Ujamaa Place could consider forming partnerships with postsecondary institutions for continued education or job skill development among participants who indicate that they need or want more skills.
- Less than half of participants (45%) whose children did not live with them at follow-up indicated that they were paying child support. Moreover, at follow-up only one-third of these participants (33%) were current on their payments. While participants experienced much success in other ultimate outcome areas – including increased income and financially supporting their families by contributing to rent – these findings suggest that participants might need more support to move forward with goals of paying child support. Particularly, paying child support consistently might contribute to continued relationship development with children and/or partners.
- While the percent of participants who had jobs tripled from entry to follow-up (23% to 72%) and the lowest wage reported by participants was higher minimum wage, some participants were working jobs that paid as little as \$8.00/hour and were working for as few as six hours per week. The successes of participants in terms of employment gains should be lauded, but it's clear that some participants were working for low wages and not working often enough to be self-sustaining.

A potential strategy Ujamaa Place could consider is hiring staff or working with volunteers to make in-roads with employers that pay higher wages and need full-time help. In addition, Ujamaa Place might consider utilizing government subsidies available for employers who hire people recently released from prison with felony convictions, which could incentivize some employers to hire Ujamaa Place participants.

Ujamaa Place men said the following about the difficulties of getting a job with a criminal record:

“Ujamaa Place needs to build its credibility with employers and employments agencies so that we can get jobs. Almost all of us have a criminal record, so Ujamaa Place really needs to show those employers and employment agencies that we have straightened our act, they have prepared us, and that we are worthy of being employed. We can't do it on our own.”

“They keep saying that I will get a job, but I've applied to a lot. I know I have a record so it's tough. They need to be real with me.”

Recommendations for continued evaluation

For a first-time evaluation, the efforts made by Ujamaa Place leadership and program staff towards completing evaluation have been largely successful, and we are grateful for their significant efforts in completing this evaluation. Wilder Research also extends much gratitude to Ujamaa Place participants for their continued cooperation with this evaluation.

That being said, it is critical for Ujamaa Place to incorporate adequate data collection and entry protocols to ensure accurate representation of Ujamaa Place's efforts in future evaluations. Moving forward, Wilder Research offers the following recommendations regarding Ujamaa Place's data collection and entry efforts:

- **Standardizing Ujamaa Place's data entry protocol.** A major limitation of this evaluation was seen in the variety of ways data were inputted into Ujamaa Place's data management system. The evaluation could have benefitted from a standardized and consistently followed data entry protocol. Ujamaa Place might consider spending more time training staff or volunteers tasked with data entry to ensure standardized data entry.
- **Rethinking data collection processes.** Another limitation of this study is that it focused on participants who received services in the 2013 calendar year. Of participants that received services in 2013, some had been enrolled in the program for as little as two months and others as long as 38 months. Ujamaa Place could consider individually tracking participants and collecting data for each individual on a quarterly or semi-annual basis, which would enable program staff and outside evaluators to focus more specifically on the successes or needs of participants who have been enrolled for similar amounts of time. This practice could help Ujamaa Place staff hone which services – and the intensity of those services – that participants should receive at different points in their involvement with Ujamaa Place.

In addition, Ujamaa Place might consider pursuing data sharing agreements with state agencies that collect data pertaining to the five ultimate outcomes outlined in the Ujamaa Place Theory of Transformation. In particular, Ujamaa Place could consider data sharing agreements with Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) for employment data, Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) for criminal history data, and Minnesota Department of Human Services Child Support offices for child support and arrears payment data. Data sharing agreements such as these would provide accurate participant data (rather than relying on participant self-report and program staff recall) as well as reduce the amount of data collection and entry tasks assigned to Ujamaa Place staff or volunteers.

- **Increasing qualitative data collection.** This evaluation featured much quantitative data which will hopefully serve to guide Ujamaa Place program staff as they continue their programming efforts. However, increasing qualitative data collection, especially information relating to overall program experience (such as what participants think of the programming or what else they might want in terms of support) as well as specific outcome areas (such as learning more about job skills that participants want to develop or how they are carrying out efforts to connect with their family or children) could benefit future evaluation efforts by contextualizing successes and challenges experienced by Ujamaa Place participants.
- **Establishing individualized, targeted goals for participants.** In addition to data entry and collection efforts, Ujamaa Place might consider setting individualized goals – related to each of the five ultimate outcome areas – for participants as they progress through program curricula. It should be noted, however, that participant goals should be appropriate for a participant’s current status and placement in Ujamaa Place programming. Such goals could be utilized as benchmarks for future evaluations, as well as serve as an encouragement tool for increased success among Ujamaa Place participants.

Moving forward, Wilder Research is hopeful for a more streamlined evaluation process including more in-depth data collected about participants which will serve to more accurately represent Ujamaa Place’s efforts and successes, as well as provide a more accurate return on investment estimate for the program overall.